

Falling Intonation (↘)

(The pitch of the voice falls at the end of the sentence.) Falling intonation is the most common intonation pattern in English. It is commonly found in statements, commands, wh-questions (information questions), confirmatory question tags and exclamations.

- **Statements**

- o Nice to meet you.
- o I'll be back in a minute.
- o She doesn't live here anymore.
- o Dad wants to change his car.
- o Here is the weather forecast.
- o Cloudy weather is expected at the end of the week.
- o We should work together more often
- o I'm going for a walk in the park.

- **Commands**

- o Write your name here.
- o Show me what you've written.
- o Leave it on the desk.
- o Take that picture down.
- o Throw that out.
- o Put your books on the table.
- o Take your hands out of your pockets.

- **Wh- questions** (requesting information.)

(questions beginning with 'who', 'what', 'why', 'where', 'when', 'which', and 'how')

- o What country do you come from?
- o Where do you work?
- o Which of them do you prefer?
- o When does the shop open?
- o How many books have you bought?
- o Which coat is yours?
- o Whose bag is this?

- **Questions Tags that are statements requesting confirmation rather than questions.**

Not all tag questions are really questions.

Some of them merely ask for confirmation or invite agreement, in which case we use a falling tone at the end.

- o He thinks he's so clever, doesn't he?
- o She's such a nuisance, isn't she?
- o He failed the test because he didn't revise, did he?
- o It doesn't seem to bother him much, does it?

- **Exclamations**

- o How nice of you!
- o That's just what I need!
- o You don't say!
- o What a beautiful voice!
- o That's a surprise!

Rising Intonation (↗)

(The pitch of the voice rises at the end of a sentence.) Rising intonation invites the speaker to continue talking. It is normally used with yes/no questions, and question tags that are real questions.

- **Yes/no Questions**

(Questions that can be answered by 'yes' or 'no'.)

- o Do you like your new teacher?
- o Have you finished already?
- o May I borrow your dictionary?
- o Do you have any magazines?
- o Do you sell stamps?
- **Questions tags that show uncertainty and require an answer** (real questions).
 - o We've met already, haven't we?
 - o You like fish, don't you?
 - o You're a new student, aren't you?
 - o The view is beautiful, isn't it?

We sometimes use a combination of rising and falling intonation in the same sentence.

The combination is called Rise-Fall or Fall-Rise intonation.

Rise-Fall Intonation (↗↘)

(The intonation rises and then falls.)

We use rise-fall intonation for choices, lists, unfinished thoughts and conditional sentences.

- **Choices** (alternative questions.)
 - o Are you having soup or salad?
 - o Is John leaving on Thursday or Friday?
 - o Does he speak German or French?
 - o Is your name Ava or Eva?
- **Lists** (rising, rising, rising, falling)
 Intonation falls on the last item to show that the list is finished.
 - o We've got apples, pears, bananas and oranges
 - o The sweater comes in blue, white, pink and black
 - o I like football, tennis, basketball and volleyball.
 - o I bought a tee-shirt, a skirt and a handbag.
- **Unfinished thoughts (partial statements)**
 In the responses to the following questions, the rise-fall intonation indicates reservation.
 The speaker hesitates to fully express his/her thoughts.
 - o Do you like my new handbag? Well, the leather is nice... (but I don't like it.)
 - o What was the meal like? Hmm, the fish was good... (but the rest wasn't great).
 - o So, you both live in Los Angeles? Well Alex does ... (but I don't).
- **Conditional sentences**
 (The tone rises in the first clause and falls gradually in the second clause.)
 - o If he calls, ask him to leave a message.
 - o Unless he insists, I'm not going to go.
 - o If you have any problems, just contact us.

Fall-Rise Intonation (↘↗)

(The voice falls and rises *usually within one word*.)

The main function of fall-rise intonation is to show that the speaker is not certain of the answer they are giving to a question, or is reluctant to reply (as opposed to a falling tone used when there is no hesitation). It is also used in polite requests or suggestions.

- **Hesitation/reluctance:**
 - o So, you'd be willing to confirm that? ...Well ... I suppose so ...
 - o You didn't see him on Monday? I don't quite remember ...
- **Politeness-Doubt-Uncertainty:** (You are not sure what the answer might be.)
 - o Perhaps we could visit the place?

- o Should we copy the list?
- o Do you think it's allowed?